1: Gorer J-5 (1937)1938 AK5 Lepcha AK5

site given above might suggest that such a term was justified. To my mind however such a conclusion would be completely erroneous, if animism is understood to mean the worship or reverence of natural objects for the forces implicit in them. The very complicated beliefs of the Lepchas' two (I should perhaps write three) religions will be dealt with fully later, but the religious attitude towards natural objects can be briefly summarised. All supernaturals, good and bad, though eternally living outside the world, have innumerable manifestations with which this world is filled. These manifestations, or replicas, of the supernaturals, choose various natural phenomena for semi-permanent habitation, agreeable phenomena—lakes, or fruit-trees or fruitful land—if the supernaturals are generally benevolent; disagreeable places—useless trees, water-falls, rocks or barren ground—if the supernaturals are generally malevolent. Each type of supernatural has a preference for a particular kind of habitation; thus all the deut *moong*—fever devils—live in big isolated trees, sabdok *moong*—skin-disease devils—in outcrops of rock.

According to lamaist beliefs everything in the world (with the exception of the earth itself and some big mountains) possesses a soul; for the soul is the animating principle of all life, without whose intermediary nothing could move or grow. But the souls of objects and animals below the vertebrates are very weak and transient things; they are easily killed and never reincarnate. For the lamaists the soul is the verbal equivalent of life; and the 'soul' of a rock or tree is only the essential quality of the rock or tree with no powers beyond making the rock hold together or the tree grow in due season. The soul of a rock or tree or river is not altered if a supernatural takes up his abode therein.

The word with which Lepchas invariably refer to the habitations of supernaturals is *li*, the word which they use for their own houses. The houses of supernaturals—particularly malevolent supernaturals—are avoided, because the devil might be annoyed at the intrusion on his privacy and would show his resentment by inflicting illness on the intruders. Similarly the supernatural would resent any injury done to his house, such as cutting down his tree or chipping off parts of his stone, and would punish the rash man by paining him in that portion of his body which corresponded to that portion of the house which had been destroyed; thus cutting from the top of a tree or a rock would result in head pains, from a branch or an outcrop in arm ache, and so on. Consequently the recognised

1: Gorer J-5 (1937)1938 AK5 Lepcha AK5

re made in every size, from the smallest to be held and turned 779
n the hand, to enormous ones several times bigger than a man, all
tuffed with repetitions of the *mantra*; every turn of these wheels
s an acquisition of merit and a remission of sin. It is not even
ecessary that the pray-er should go to the effort of turning these
wheels; wheels driven by mechanical power are just as efficient.
Tafoor has four water-turned prayer-wheels set over a small stream
y his house. The next most conspicuous method of automatic
raying is the prayer-flag; this consists of a piece of cloth stamped
vith various *mantra* and attached to a pole; each time the wind
nakes the cloth flutter it is as if the prayer were uttered. There
re a variety of these flags, some being for the benefit of the dead
nd others for that of the living. Finally the inscription of a
nantra on stone (either in Tibetan or preferably Lenza characters)
nd set into a monument or building, acts as though this inscribed
rayer was being said continuously.

The metaphysical beliefs of the lamas concerning the soul are 774 ●
arious and self-contradictory. The soul of man can die, but the 779
oul is immortal. The soul can be devoured by demons or destroyed
y sorcery and will nevertheless be reincarnated. With the excep-
ion of the earth itself and certain mountains, which are the homes
f supernaturals, everything possesses a soul; but the souls of
ocks and plants are very weak and only survive as long as their
wner survives. With plants every seed, as soon as it is formed,
ossesses a potential soul of its own, as does a cutting, as soon as it
s separated from the parent plant and stuck in the ground. It is a
neritorious act to increase vegetable souls but no punishable sin is
ommitted by destroying them.

The souls of animals (with the exception of leeches and mosqui-
oes, which are believed to be emanations of devils and soul-less)
re far more important; it is a major sin to destroy an animal for
t is possible that its soul may be that of an ex-human being; and
ious people will erect prayer-flags for animals killed through
ccident or in the normal course of human life. Partly by divina-
ion, and partly by the observation of footprints near the place where
he body was disposed of, it is possible to tell if the soul of a recently
lead relative has been reincarnated as an animal; if this does occur
t is said that the near relations should abstain from eating this
pecies of animal. I never came across nor heard of such an instance
f ritual prohibition, for dead people are never discovered to have
nigrated into any animal which was fit to eat.

1: Gorer J-5 (1937)1938 AK5 Lepcha AK5

The reincarnated soul of a human being arises at the moment of conception and is all through life as it were the mirror image of the body it inhabits. Thus a baby's soul is as weak and feeble as its body; and it is for this reason that Lepchas always attach a snail-shell round their baby's necks or wrists; it may be that the soul will be pursued by demons and will not have time enough to get back to the midriff under the heart—the normal home of the soul in waking life; the pursued soul can then creep into the snail-shell where it can hide in safety. The souls of very old people are equally feeble; but no hiding place is necessary for them as they are too tough for devils to eat. Anything which happens to the body also happens to the soul, which is aware of it a split second earlier; if the body is cut or maimed or feels any sensation, the same thing occurs to the soul; if this were not so how could we feel anything? In normal waking life a man's body and soul are only separated in the case of violent accident; if for example a man should fall from a tree the soul would make a tremendous effort to separate itself from the body, get down safely and then return to its body afterwards. If the soul falls with the body the soul will be killed and the body die; but if the soul escapes the man will fall unconscious and be later revived when the soul re-enters its house.[6] Only in sleep or through mystic practices can the soul be separated from the body during life. Madness is believed to be the possession of a demon which imprisons the soul inside the body.

Finally lamaism is a social organisation. The lamas (to a lesser extent the nuns) are arranged in a disciplined hierarchy. They are a section of society which performs for the whole society its religious functions; in return the rest of society should give material support to the lamas. In Tibet this social aspect is extremely important; the lamas possess the greater part of the temporal power and are also as a group an exploiting class; the monasteries own land and the peasants attached to the land are practically monastery serfs. The lower-ranking lamas also work for the benefit of those of higher rank and are possibly as much exploited as the peasants; but they have, at least in theory, the possibility of rising to the higher ranks, which possibilities are completely shut out from the laymen. In Sikkim, as far as I can learn, the social influence of the lamas is considerably less; in Lingthem the monastery as a 'legal person' owns no land; the villagers help to pay for its building and upkeep,

[6] The Lepchas only recognise fainting or unconsciousness through pain; they do not consider fainting through fear or disgust or grief possible.

2: Morris T-5 (1937)1938 AK5 Lepcha AK5

CHAPTER 5

Lamaism: Monks and Nuns

TO the ignorant Lepcha the world is peopled by spirits; evil spirits known as *Mung*, and good spirits known as *Rum*, or gods. It is difficult sometimes to decide whether a particular spirit is devil or god; for while a Mung is always evil, a Rum, if angered, will appear in a malicious guise and may then be referred to as a demon. Every happening in the material world is due to the influence of spirits. Devils cause sickness, bad harvests, and every other kind of misfortune: but provided they are appeased by means of the correct sacrifices their evil can be averted, and on occasions they may even be induced to further some particular project, such as causing the death of an enemy, or winning the heart of some apparently stony-hearted woman. Some earlier writers have described the Lepchas as animists, but I believe this idea to be mistaken. Animism implies the attribution of a living soul to inanimate objects and natural phenomena; but the Lepcha has not this belief. According to his ideas, trees, rivers, rocks and other natural objects are only the homes of spirits; but as such they must be treated with proper respect. The objects themselves, however, while they are sometimes thought to possess a separate soul, do not need to be propitiated. When a house, for instance, is being built, a sacrifice will be made when the trees are felled from which it is to be constructed. This sacrifice, however, is offered not to the spirits considered to be inherent in the trees themselves, but to compensate for any annoyance which might be caused to spirits living in them, and also as a general expiation for the sin of taking life; for trees, being living things, are thought to have separate souls of their own. This last is only a minor

2: Morris T-5 (1937)1938 AK5 Lepcha AK5

774 consideration and its neglect would not cause any immediate
782 retribution; but a failure to propitiate the actual spirits might be fraught with all sorts of evil consequences and no one would willingly omit to carry it out.

[771] It is not possible for an ordinary man to have direct
756 dealings with the spirit world, nor indeed would he normally know the cause of his particular trouble. The cause of certain common ills, such for instance as coughs and colds, boils or fever, are, of course, well known to most people, but not the special knowledge required to make the necessary sacrifices to the particular demon which has caused them. For this it is necessary to have recourse to a proper practitioner, either a *Mun* or a *Yukman*, which is the word used by Lepchas to denote a Lama. It seems certain that prior to the introduction of Buddhism into Sikkim such sacerdotal functions as were required by the Lepchas were carried out by Muns. Their services are still much in demand in Lingtem, where they work in close conjunction with the Lamas. In other parts of Sikkim, however, their numbers are steadily decreasing, and the tendency is for all priestly functions to be carried out only by Lamas. In the Kalimpong district (in British India) there are still large colonies of Lepchas, and amongst these people Muns have almost ceased to exist. Such as there are practise almost secretly, for their presence is not welcome to orthodox Lamas.

793 "A notable feature of Lamaism throughout all its sects," notes Waddell, "and decidedly un-Buddhistic, is that the Lama is a priest rather than a monk. He assigns himself an
[538] indispensable place in the religion and has coined the current saying, 'Without a Lama in front there is no (approach to) God.' He performs sacerdotal functions on every possible occasion, and a large proportion of the order is almost entirely engaged in this work. And such services are in much demand, for the people are in hopeless bondage to the demons, and not altogether unwilling slaves to their exacting worship."

795 The Lamas of Sikkim belong to the *Nin-Ma-pa* or

2: Morris T-5 (1937)1938 AK5 Lepcha AK5

child is born; and during this period it is thought that the father's actions can affect the fœtus equally with those of the mother. It is believed that a newly-born child is not in full possession of its soul until three days after its birth, and for this reason the precautions are observed until this day.

During the time of birth no man is present in the room, and the subject is naturally an impossible one for a male to investigate. Karma said that when he was a boy he was very anxious to see how babies were born, and one day he went unnoticed to a house in order to witness this event. It had only a floor of bamboo slats, so that by standing underneath and looking up he was able to see everything:

"The woman was holding on to a rope, which was suspended from the roof, and was herself being held from behind by another woman. I first saw a large round object appear, which was apparently the baby's head. Every time the mother grunted a little more appeared; but when she ceased to grunt the whole object appeared to contract and disappear. There was complete silence for a bit and then the object seemed to shoot out of the woman's body with great rapidity. I saw that it was the baby.

"I noticed that the woman's vulva was very large and round; but I was not frightened, nor did I feel the least shame. I think I really did not think about the matter at all. I suppose I must have been about eight or nine years of age at the time this happened. I only went because I was very interested to see how a baby was born, and because I wanted to see what a woman's vulva was like. I could not now watch this sort of thing, as it would have too exciting an effect on me."

If the afterbirth does not descend it is usual to sever the child's umbilical cord and tie it to one of the mother's toes. At the same time any Mun who has previously attended her should now come and again wave elephant grass over her. Failure to get rid of the afterbirth is due to the mother having stepped across a ring of straw during pregnancy, an action which is thought to cause the vaginal passage to

4:Nebesky-Wojkowitz E-5 (1950-1951)1952
AK5 Lepcha AK5

ANCIENT FUNERAL CEREMONIES OF THE LEPCHAS

R. NEBESKY DE WOJKOWITZ

The teachings and rites of the Unreformed School of Tibetan Buddhism—nowadays the dominant creed in the Sikkim State—have deeply influenced the beliefs and religious practices of the Lepchas, the main group of aboriginal inhabitants in the Sikkim area. In the course of four centuries, which passed since the introduction of Tibetan Buddhism into Sikkim,[1] the original Lepcha traditions became so closely intermingled with ideas and customs of Tibetan origin,[2] that it is now a most difficult task to separate these two groups from each other; this state is still more complicated by the fact that the Lepchas accepted—even if only in a smaller degree—also some of the traditions and customs of the neighbouring Mangars, Limbus,[3] Nepalese and Bhutanese. Among many other customs also ideas concerning the human soul, death and its causes, life after death, etc., as well as the funeral ceremonies themselves were greatly changed under Tibetan influence. Thus the belief in a judgement of the soul by the Lord of the Dead, *Cho ge pă no*[4] (Tb. *Chhos kyi rgyal po*), the migration of the soul through the perils of the *Bar do*[5] (Tb. *Bar do*)—the stage between death and new life—and its rebirth in one of the "six worlds", the punishment of sinners in hell or *Nyó lyang* (Tb. *dMyal ba*), and other well known theories of Tibetan Buddhism are therefore today widely spread among the Lepchas. Oral tradition, however, preserved accounts of the early Lepcha customs and in some of the remote, scarcely accessible valleys of Sikkim the old funeral rites are said to be still observed.

According to the old Lepcha belief,[6] the soul[7] is given to a human being by *Fă grông thing* and his wife *Nă zông nyo*, the ancestors of the Lepcha race,[8] at the moment of birth. *Nă zông nyo*, who is also responsible for the conception, determines of which sex the child is going to be. The place from which the soul comes and to which it again returns after a man's death, is called *Rŭm lyang*, "the place of gods". It is believed, that this place lies somewhere in the hills, close to Mount Kanchenjunga.[9] The soul, once it has returned to the *Rŭm lyang*, will stay there with the spirits of the ancestors and not reincarnate in this world again. It also will not have to undergo any punishment for the sins, which the deceased might have committed during his lifetime.

At the time of birth, the soul is believed to be very small, but later on it becomes gradually bigger, keeping pace with the growth of the body. The soul of a living being is called *A pil* and it

4:Nebesky-Wojkowitz E-5 (1950-1951) 1952
AK5 Lepcha AK5

changes at the moment of death into a spirit, named *Mŭk nyam*; this change itself is termed *Hyit*. The *A pil* is said to get scared very easily and when frightened can even leave the body; the separation of the soul from the body results however in the instantaneous death of the human being. To protect small children from this danger, mothers often fasten round the neck or armwrist of the child a string with a snail shell on it, "as refuge for the soul".[10]

Illness and death are attributed by the Lepchas to a number of malignant demons who have to be propitiated by various ceremonies, in order to prevent their attacks or to rescue a victim from their influence. Among the host of these evil supernaturals, whose names and spheres of influence vary with the traditions of the different parts of the Lepcha land, there are some who are believed to be especially dangerous as they do not satisfy their greed by harming people through illness, but who try either to eat man's flesh or to destroy his soul. A few of these supernatural beings, as *Sang grong mung*, *Dŭt mung* and his wife *Sŭ mo mung*, etc. who seem to have been at one time widely known and feared among the Lepchas, are believed to have vanished since man started clearing the jungle and to settle even in the remotest parts of Sikkim.

Sang grong mung and his wife,—the supernaturals of the Lepchas mostly appear in pairs—are said to have been half men and half apes. Their abode were deep, dark caverns in the hills. They lived on human flesh and to satisfy their hunger they often tried to get people into their power by offering them presents. The person, who had met the *Sang grong mung* or his consort, had no other choice than to accept the gift; however, he had to take it with the back of his hands and not with the palms as customary, otherwise his life was lost.

Dŭt mung and his wife *Sŭ mo mung*—who was always accompanied by her servant *Sŭ mo thor*—had children and they lived in a house, just like men. Their hunting ground was the jungle, where they killed lonely travellers and ate their flesh. *Sŭ mo mung*, who was an ugly ogre with long matted hair and emaciated breasts, is said to have been very fond of seducing young men. To achieve her aim, she could change herself—by brushing her hair back and rubbing her body—into a lovely girl. She induced her victim, to follow her to her house, where she killed and devoured him; but sometimes, if she liked the man, she kept him with her for some time, hiding him from her jealous husband.

Another demon, frequently held responsible for the death of a person, is *Mă zóm mung*, who is said to appear in the form of a huge black dog with ferociously gleaming eyes and a flaming mouth. To

11:Hermanns M-5 (1951)1954
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it falls down to the earth once again. This is the line of action from lower to the higher. And so it must be that the land of the gods must be below." In this as in other matters we find that there is a varied line of reasoning among the Lepchas.

(e) The Land of Souls

Some Lepchas believe that the souls of the departed go to the country of the ancestors, Ren djong or Mayal. Others say on the contrary that the soul goes to Rum-lyang. It was there before birth ; thither it returns again after death to be born again as a little child in the land of souls. Immediately after death, the soul goes to an intermediate place Sŏn-lyang, originally called Sŏm-lon, the leader of souls. The Bong-thing summons it back thence and asks it, at the death ceremony how it died, whether it was through illness or through the magic of wicked men. The soul then comes to the ear of the Bong-thing and gives him this important information. He makes the necessary provisions for the individual soul on the basis of this information. The Mun or Bong-thing then leads the soul to the Rum-lyang and locks it up securely so that it cannot return to its pristine home or relations or cause them any manner of harm. The entire ceremony is performed in the Sang-lion rite. A year after death the Bong-thing goes in a trance to Rum-lyang, opens up the place where the soul had been locked. There he finds a little child. He dresses it up in a child's clothes and releases it to live and grow up among the other ancestors.[81]

According to others there is an intermediate place called Tiamtan, or Sari-rung-dong-chen or Siri-nong-dong-chen.[82] Another place is called Nyo-lyang, the abode of the wicked. There are divergent views about the land of souls, just as there are about the land of gods. An old Mun woman of Git-biyong gave us this pertinent item of information, "We bring the souls of the dead very high up in to the heavens and very near the Supreme God, Ta-she-thing. He it is who has created us, the animals and everything else."

81. cfr. G. Gorer, Himalayan Village, London 1938, p. 253 sq.
82. cfr. Siccha, op. cit. p. 257.

11;Hermanns M-5 (1951)1954
AK5 Lepcha AK5

life is of greater value than hers. Take it! The body and soul of the ox are greater than those of this person. Take them! Leave the people in peace." As he says this he offers chi, rice and butter, laying these three sacrificial gifts on the forehead of the animal. Then, he says with greater emphasis, "The body and the soul of this animal must be sacrificed." The ox is then killed by the blow of an axe on the nape of its neck. Any one except a woman, can perform the actual killing; for if a woman were to kill the animal it would be a terrible misfortune and no one would be allowed to eat the meat. The head of the ox is then severed from the body and the body is carved up. The legs are taken off, the entrails and the internal organs are drawn out, the head is taken off, the thorax is divided vertically into two, and the loins with the tail are dissected.

The first part of the sacrifice is performed in front of the house near the door. Except for the head, loins, tail and the entrails, the left side of the animal is sacrificed to the demons. From the more valuable parts, *e.g.* the heart, liver, spleen, kidneys and lungs, only very small pieces are taken away for the sacrifice to the demons. The Torma for about fourteen demons are placed on a little table; for Ge-be-mung, Techö-mung (the fever-demon), Tsang-dog-mung (the demon who causes stiffness in the limbs), Me-sun-mung (the life-spirit), Mig-nyan-mung, Ka-so-mu, Me-mu and others whose names we could not ascertain. It is believed that the demons are appeased through this sacrifice, that they leave the sick person and come no more into the house.

The second part of the sacrifice takes place inside the house. The right side of the animal together with the head, the more valuable parts, the entrails, the loins and the tail are ranged in the following manner: In the large room a little distance away from the fire place, the skin of the animal is spread on the floor with its hairy side down, and the tail end nearest the fire place. Over this the skull is laid at the head end, with the snout pointing to a little table which is placed against the wall opposite to the fireplace. A little behind the skull the fore and the hind legs are placed on the right and left side of it. In between the legs are laid the breast bones, the loins, the tail, entrails and the valuable parts. These cover

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765 782 776 From the Gu-gu Bong-thing we procured the text of another prayer said during the sacrifice of a sick person: "Fa dong dju and Fa dong dō, Gom shi, Gom yu gods! (invocation). The earth was created, the water was created, the whole world was created. The millet beer offering chi and the rice offering so were created. The Tōg bu ta she was created. Come hither, ye spirits. For the benefit of the creatures, of the world, and of the whole existing creation I sacrifice in this manner. Against suffering and harm I sacrifice. For myself I sacrifice. To the house-hold gods I sacrifice. As it has been handed down from the beginning of earth's creation, so must we sacrifice. Then to the deities of this house (of the sick man), to the Great God of the aTzam sacrifice, to the gods [774] of the soul and the life-spirit (of the sick man), to the Darmit[61]

[539] 61. Fa dong dju fa dong dō
Fa dong dju and Fa dong dō (names for the male and female family gods; dong is the tribal name; dju is the male Himalayan mountain spirit; dō is the female spirit, that comes from the river).

gom shi gom yu rum lyang it ung it
Gom shi and Gom yu gods! The earth was created, the water was created,

lyang sōg dōm it chi log so log it
the whole world was created. Millet beer offering, rice offering were created.

lyang tōg bu ta she it ga.
Then Tōg bu ta she was created. (This is Tak bo thing or Ta she thing so often mentioned, who was the first man or the son of the Supreme God Ta she thing.)

plō sog dōm long ming
Come here! (invitation to the spirits). For the creature's interests of the

dam ga son dōn dog ga alom sug bam
whole world and of the whole existing creation I sacrifice in this manner.

adog anot sa pe ka sug bam
Against suffering and harm I sacrifice.

ga do sug to bam rum dar ngag to bam
For myself I sacrifice also. To the household gods I sacrifice at once.

yang ayit plō nōng
Likewise as it has been handed down from the beginning of earth's creation

sug gad bam along do do li rum
thus must we make sacrifice. Now to the deities of this house, to the

aTzam athing rum
Great God of the aTzam sacrifice (aTzam sacrifice is the name of the sacrifice which is laid on the bull's forehead, as we saw above),

mung gung man la rum pong darmit rum pong
to the soul and the life-spirit (of the sick man) gods, Darmit gods,

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and the Dartik gods, to the water and the flood gods, to all 782
the gods together I sacrifice now. To our life-spirits and 776
soul gods, to Darmit, the god of life's destiny, to Alat and [774]
Ayek, the gods of procreation, to the benefactors of the souls, to the gods who lend the strength of life, I must sacrifice, since I know how to do so. The god of my personal destiny is witness; if I do not sacrifice—then may a long illness come. But if I do know how to perform the right sacrifice—that is a godly thing. If I do not know how to perform the right sacrifice but sacrifice, that is a devilish thing. If I do not perform the right sacrifice—then may the demons come here. In this manner, O Ayek and Alat, come to this spot here. Traitors shall we be to the ancestral gods if we, the descendants, sacrifice in this (wrong) way. Thus we sacrifice (rightly) as is our duty. As our ancestors did—so do we honour (the gods) We, the living, set on this spot (bull's head) millet beer and[61].

61a. dartik rum pong [539]
Dartik gods (both are supposed to be female and male messengers, who bring news to the priest who performs the sacrifice; they are familiar deities of the Lepchas)

ung fat ung glum rum pong sug ngag la bam
to the water and the flood goods, to them altogether I sacrifice now.
dō dō dzam hi dzam nyong rum pong khing tsung darmit rum pong
Our own life-spirits and soul gods, god of life's destiny, Darmit,
ayek alat rum pong dzō bōn pu rum pong
gods of procreation, Ayek and Alat, gods as benefactors of the soul,
ong bon pu rum pong djū la mat mong
the gods who lend the strength of life; if I know how to sacrifice, so
sag yu gong nōn dō dō khing tsung go nōng sug ma yōn gong
I must do it. The god of my personal destiny knows it; if I do not
sūn dō dō a yō a riom plō cho djū la sag yō
sacrifice, then may a long illness come, come. But if I do know
gong la rum gōm
how to perform the right sacrifice, then is that a godly thing.
djō la sag ma yō nōng gong na mung gōm
But if I do not know how to perform the right sacrifice that is a demonish thing.
dō dō sag la ma yōng gong na mung ni gom
If I do not perform the right sacrifice, then shall the demon be here.
a lem sag dōm ga ayek alat plō
In this way and at this place Ayek and Alat come here!
nyō ting sa rum gōm go yu gab djong
We shall not become traitors to the ancestral gods, if we,
ati adzo nong ga su gad shō bu sa yuk
the descendants, sacrifice in this way. It is our duty to sacrifice thus.
dō ting ga ning long fat sa yuk gom
As our ancestors did, so we also do honour in this way.
go yu sun nin sag dōm ga chi lag so log mat nūn.
We, the living, set on this spot (head of the bull) millet beer and rice-offering.